

Review Essay Series

URBAN HISTORY OF KANSAS

William S. Worley

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

It seems odd that so few Kansans recognize the crucial role urban places have played in our history. One of the most famous Kansans, William Allen White, was a town man who castigated the rural Populists for driving the lifeblood of towns and cities, capital, out of the state. At the same time that we memorialize White, we forget that towns and cities represent the developmental aspect of Kansas history. They were places of trade and processing that from the beginning tied Kansas to the national market and beyond. They brought in capital, linked urban and rural life, and offered Kansans the opportunity to develop music, art, and literature that could feed off the concentrated and diverse populations of urban life.

Bill Worley's essay reminds us that towns have been a part of the history of Kansas since the territory opened in 1854. One might even note that cities just east of Kansas funded the great exploring expeditions, the fur trade, and other enterprises that profoundly affected Kansas before it became a territory. Because town establishment paralleled that of farming it called forth more rapid rural agricultural development. Towns were also the seats of early industrial activities such as flour mills, railroad shops, mines, and meatpacking plants. Because of urban places, children were taught individual enterprise, competition, a sense of individual liberty, even the concept of

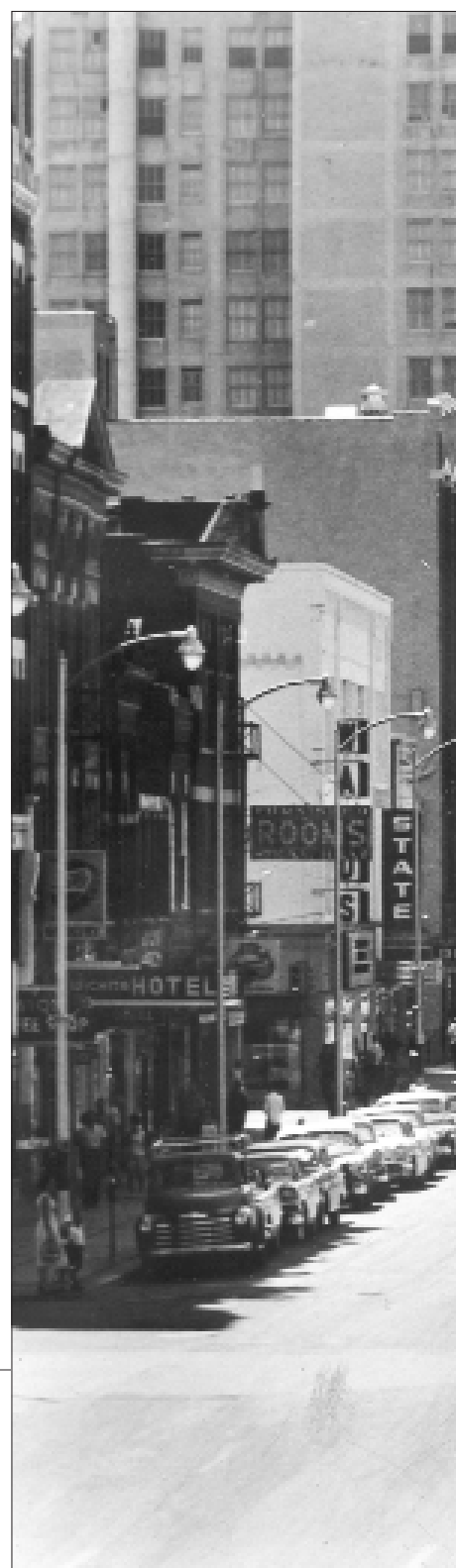
It is most difficult to assess the urban history of a state that has very carefully avoided identification as "urban" throughout its entire history. Whether one thinks of the cowboys, the cattle trails and Abilene or Dodge City; or of Dorothy and the Wizard of Oz; or even fields of wheat and sunflowers waving in the breeze, almost all public images of Kansas are rural and agricultural. Even the current state slogan, "Kansas—As Big as You Think," emphasizes the wide-open spaces.

The most recent full-length interpretation of Kansas state history by Craig Miner provides excellent coverage of the territorial years, the building of the agricultural base, the political vicissitudes of this normally most Republican of states and insights into the personalities who have shaped this "land of contrasts." But neither it, nor Robert Richmond's otherwise excellent college text version of Kansas state history, spend more than a few pages chronicling the urban background of Kansas.¹

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1. Craig Miner, *Kansas: The History of the Sunflower State, 1854–2000* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002); Robert Richmond, *Kansas: A Land of Contrasts*, 4th ed. (Wheeling, Ill.: Harlan-Davidson, 1999).

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Since World War II Wichita has reigned as Kansas's largest urban center. Photographed here in 1961 is this city's main downtown street, Douglas Avenue.

romantic love as well as reading, writing, and arithmetic.

The strength of Worley's essay is the reminder of numerous books "celebrating the growth of cities and towns" in Kansas. We also learn that one of the state's most intriguing cities is the least studied. Kansas City was in its heyday a major industrial center in contrast to the rural imagines of that time. Here were major stockyards and slaughtering operations, massive railroad shops and yards, and the significant Fairfax Industrial district. Here too was a working class population made up in large part of immigrant people. Again, as Worley points out, as the industries of Kansas City, Kansas, declined, Wichita "surged to the forefront of urban Kansas during World War II" and remains the state's metropolis.

The inclusion of suburbia defines one historical focus that has yet to be carefully developed in Kansas history. Since suburbia is "home" for a growing number of Kansans, study of the process of developing suburbs and the way of life created there will be important to the historical experience of many Kansans. One must also note the significant and sometimes frightening environmental process of suburbanization of rural areas that are not intended to be integrated into an urban place.

Rural industrialization is one of the most controversial developments discussed in this essay. But cities are the source of capital for the industry, and the process has transformed both towns and farms. Meatpacking, a mainstay of earlier Kansas City has moved to rural and small-town Kansas. In the process it has transformed the towns and engendered corporate control of rural lands.

Urban life is an important topic for Kansas history, one that deserves much more careful treatment. One hopes this essay will not be the last word on urban Kansas but rather a signal for a new burst of research and writing.

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However, Kansas is, and for some time has been, a decidedly urban state. Since the 1950s more than half of the state's residents have lived "in town" or in one of its larger cities. In 2005 a little more than one of every two Kansans lived in one of the five most populated counties of the state, and well over two-thirds of state residents lived in an "urban place" of twenty-five hundred or more in population. Thus, for most Kansans in the twenty-first century, Kansas is an urban state.²

Given that it took Kansas nearly fifty years (1861–1910) to register more than one-fourth urban population, the rural stereotype understandably held until after the World War II acceleration of urban settlement. Sometime in the 1950s Kansas passed over the 50 percent urban threshold. From that point to the present, the urban reality has clashed with the romantic myth of rural Kansas in the minds of state residents. It is almost as though Kansans do not want to see themselves as urban, or even suburban, but rather enjoy clinging to the pioneer prairie myth.

Since Kansas has been so frequently interpreted as a rural environment, the large number of books published during the past 150 years celebrating the growth of cities and towns comes as something of a surprise. Admittedly the vast majority of these are heavily promotional or commemorative books written by supportive members of the respective communities involved. This essay attempts to call attention to many useful, but limited, older works. Since almost none of them provides any statewide context for the development of Kansas cities and towns, this essay also seeks to put forth the need for city and town histories that interpret their total community history including the newcomers and immigrants who have more recently shaped much of Kansas urban life. The trend toward suburban life and the changes in human existence brought by that rarified atmosphere also requires additional attention. The tendency in the past has been to concentrate on the "traditional" town founders and to ignore the depth and texture brought by the nonconforming groups.³

Fortunately, James R. Shortridge of the University of Kansas geography faculty has recently published a fine and readable analytical book that closes this gap. His *Cities on the Plains: The Evolution of Urban Kansas* is a much-needed volume that focuses on the economic basis for the development of cities in the state. While it does little to describe life in Kansas cities and towns aside from their economic reasons for existence, it helps one make sense of why some towns became cities while others have since lost their urban status altogether. The *social* history of urban Kansas has yet to be written.

2. Data interpolated from "Population of Cities in Kansas, 1860–2000," appendix in James R. Shortridge, *Cities on the Plains: The Evolution of Urban Kansas* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 382–87. Matt Campbell and Jeffrey Spivak, "Overland Park, Olathe Grew Faster in '90s than Expected," *Kansas City Star*, March 13, 2001. The five largest counties are Johnson, Sedgwick, Shawnee, Wyandotte, and Douglas. An "urban" place by U.S. Census Bureau definition is any residential area containing more than twenty-five hundred residents within incorporated limits.

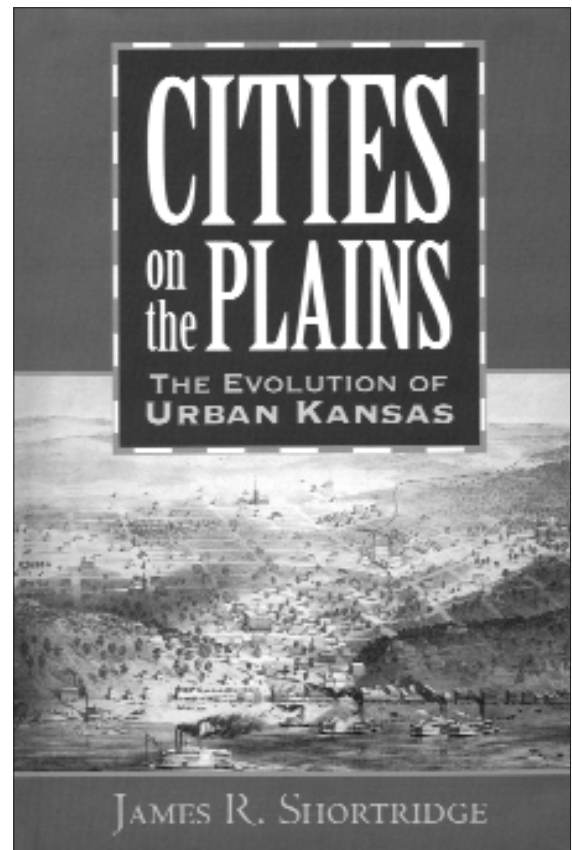
3. Some examples of the standard types of local histories are the various county histories and centennial volumes or special newspaper editions that celebrate the economic leaders and local gentry. They include, but are not restricted to, Oresmus H. Bentley, ed. *History of Wichita and Sedgwick County, Kansas*, 2 vols. (Chicago: C. F. Cooper and Co., 1910); Joseph S. Boughton, *Lawrence, Kansas: A Good Place to Live* (Lawrence, Kans.: J. S. Boughton, 1904); Ruby P. Bramwell, *Salina: City on the Move* (Salina, Kans.: Survey Press, 1969); *Centennial Edition* (Iola, Kans.: Iola Register, May 30, 1955); *The Centennial Mirror* (Olathe, Kans.: Olathe Mirror, April 29, 1957). All these studies contribute to the discourse, but they apply almost no critical or analytical method to the development of the particular cities involved. They simply chronicle and celebrate with the intention of boosting public spirit and support rather than prompting individual reflection or evaluation.

Shortridge provides an interesting analysis of place theory and the economic relation of cities and towns to each other. His study yields the important realization that while Kansans largely govern their own fate, the largest population section of the state—the northeast quadrant—has always been more dependent on Missouri central cities than on any Kansas site. Central cities are those economic and social centers that dominate surrounding urban and rural territory by their sheer size and activity. Specifically, Kansas City, Missouri, and, secondarily, St. Joseph, Missouri, continue to have significant impact on the most heavily populated sections of Kansas.⁴

Indeed, it is not too much to say that the most important city for Kansas has been Kansas City, *Missouri*, from the 1870s to the present. Necessarily because railroads tended to funnel through that metropolis before fanning out across Kansas from the opening of the first railroad bridge across the Missouri River (at Kansas City, Missouri, in 1869), Kansans have looked to the east for their news and entertainment as well as for their business investment, banking connections, and social connections. This is not to say that Kansas cities did not try to wrest the “central city” title from Kansas City, especially early on. I. E. Quastler and Charles Glaab have both well chronicled the competitive efforts of Leavenworth and Lawrence especially to attract railroads that might bypass the developing metropolis. In the end, the Kansas City-connected roads tended to swallow up the smaller Kansas lines, but it was not for the want of trying.⁵

Bearing out this thesis in the twenty-first century, if one measures the 2000 population of the twenty-four northeast Kansas counties, the resulting 1.3 million residents constitute 48 percent of the total state population. The official Kansas City metropolitan counties in Kansas included 28 percent of the total state population.⁶

For decades from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries northeast Kansas included a city that formed part of the nineteenth largest metropolitan area in the nation. Yet, one searches almost in vain to learn much in the standard histories of the state about Kansas City, Kansas. The most recent example, a fine volume by Craig Miner, demonstrates the problem.⁷ While extensive sections document various aspects of agriculture and politics, the entries on cities, even Miner’s hometown of Wichita, tend to be brief. We learn much about former governors and free soilers but comparatively little about the diver-



James R. Shortridge's analytical work Cities on the Plains is a much-needed volume that focuses on the economic basis for the development of cities in the state.

4. Shortridge, *Cities on the Plains*, 371.

5. I. E. Quastler, “Charting a Course: Lawrence, Kansas, and Its Railroad Strategy, 1854–1872,” *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 18 (Spring 1995): 18; Quastler, *The Railroads of Lawrence* (Lawrence, Kans.: Coronado Press, 1979); Charles N. Glaab, *Kansas City and the Railroads: Community Policy in the Growth of a Regional Metropolis* (1962; reprint, Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993).

6. The twenty-four counties include Atchison, Brown, Clay, Dickinson, Doniphan, Douglas, Franklin, Geary, Jackson, Jefferson, Johnson, Leavenworth, Lyon, Marshall, Miami, Morris, Nemaha, Osage, Pottawatomie, Riley, Shawnee, Wabaunsee, Washington, and Wyandotte. The seven Kansas metropolitan counties in the Kansas City region consist of Atchison, Franklin, Johnson, Leavenworth, Linn, Miami, and Wyandotte. The Kansas metropolitan population including the seven Kansas City counties plus Douglas (Lawrence), Shawnee (Topeka), Sedgwick (Wichita), Harvey, and Butler totals 58 percent of the state’s residents.

7. Miner, *Kansas: The History of the Sunflower State*.

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sity and institutions of Kansas cities and towns. Earlier state histories provide even less information with the slight exception of Frank Blackmar’s volumes that explicitly include sections on towns and cities. Even there, the topics are treated individually rather than as a pattern or significant resource for the state.⁸

Indeed, urban Kansas has had little attention at all until the 2004 publication of Shortridge’s *Cities on the Plains*. Shortridge has attempted an economic analysis of the growth of Kansas towns and cities under a variety of headings: river towns; railroad towns; mining towns; and post-industrial, service towns. The key to his study is the word “town.” It appears in most of the chapter headings and is quite apt for the discussion. In reality most of Kansas’s cities have always been towns—some sizeable, most rather small.⁹

To provide a definition for the study, Shortridge uses the federal census definition of “urban” that has held since the nineteenth century—any place that includes more than twenty-five hundred residents is considered urban. The problem is that it lumps together such disparate entities as Sterling (population 2,642 in 2000), Manhattan (44,831), Topeka (122,377), Overland Park (149,08) and the state’s one independent metropolis—Wichita (344,284).

One very helpful appendix in *Cities on the Plains* lists the population since 1860 of every town in the state that does now or has in the past exceeded the urban threshold of twenty-five hundred residents. In Kansas, 118 “cities” fit this category although 16 no longer contained the required number in the year 2000.

Researchers need to define “urban” more accurately than whether a town can muster twenty-five hundred residents in a particular census year. No one can argue, for example, that Mission Woods (population 165) is a rural place, located as it is in the very northeast corner of Kansas’s most populous county (Johnson). Similarly, it is impossible for residents to consider Ulysses (population 5,960) urban, given its location in quite rural and agricultural Grant County near the Colorado and Oklahoma borders.

Sadly, there is no government category for the time-honored designation of “town.” In Kansas this term so aptly describes hundreds of Kansas communities that are not rural and certainly do not want to be urban. As a result, the Shortridge study resorts to describing many towns as urban centers that are simply small towns featuring a quality way of life that is neither urban nor rural.

This essay considers the major urban centers of Wichita, Topeka, Kansas City, and Lawrence along with certain individual cities of such size and cultural importance that they too must be considered beacons of urban Kansas—Salina, Manhattan, Hutchinson, Garden City, Emporia, Dodge City, Hays, Liberal, Pittsburg, Junction City, Newton, and Great Bend. All these smaller cities have more than fifteen thousand residents and are not otherwise included in the clutches of one of the four metropolitan regions of the state. Size is a factor in determining the previous list, but some of Kansas’s larger cities such as Olathe, Shawnee, and

8. Frank Wilson Blackmar, *Kansas: A Cyclopaedia of State History*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Standard Publishing Company, 1912); William Elsey Connelley, *A Standard History of Kansas and Kansans*, 5 vols. (Chicago and New York: Lewis, 1918); Kenneth Davis, *Kansas: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976); Richmond, *Kansas: A Land of Contrasts*; William Zornow, *Kansas: A History of the Jayhawk State* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957).

9. Shortridge, *Cities on the Plains*. By way of truth in advertising, it is necessary to disclose that Professor Shortridge served on my doctoral committee at the University of Kansas.

Leavenworth are missing from it because they have to be considered part of the larger metropolitan regions in which they exist. This discussion will omit the wonderful Kansas “towns” of McPherson, El Dorado, Winfield, Arkansas City, and Ottawa along with hundreds of other, smaller places that truly should wear the banner of “town” quite proudly.

Any consideration of urban Kansas should rightfully begin with the place that has served the state longest as its largest city—Kansas City, Kansas. As noted initially, it is almost certainly the most understudied and possibly the most interesting piece of the urban Kansas story. From 1886 to approximately 1946, it ranked as the largest city in Kansas. It remains the third largest and most ethnically diverse.

Kansas City, Kansas, has always had the misfortune of living in the shadow of its larger neighbor to the east—the Missouri Kansas City. “KCK,” as it is affectionately known, does have one lengthy historical treatment, published in 1911. Subsequently, former KCK mayor Joseph McDowell published a very worthwhile interpretation of its development during the first half of the twentieth century. Very possibly the most important work on Kansas’s most industrial city is Marilyn Dell Brady’s resource book for studying Kansas City entitled *Doing Local History in Kansas City, Kansas*. Anyone wishing to pursue Kansas City, Kansas, history must begin with this volume.¹⁰

Professor Shortridge has provided us with a number of useful books about the geographic variety of Kansas. One of his most interesting forays is a slight volume that includes much on the more recent past of Kansas City, Kansas. Entitled *Kaw Valley Landscapes*, this little book provides a series of road trips full of historical detail and remarkable insight into the patterns of growth and development of KCK and other rural and more urban settings of Kansas’s populous northeast quadrant.¹¹

What is missing in studies of KCK’s history is any analysis of the city’s dramatic decline in population since 1970 even while it expanded its territory to include by the 1990s all of Wyandotte County except the separately incorporated towns of Edwardsville and Bonner Springs. This is a story of declining industrial base, racial conflict, and ethnic transition, but it also has to be balanced by attention to the transformation of western KCK since 2000 by the construction of the NASCAR racetrack and surrounding commercial development that places the



The industrial-based Kansas City, Kansas (KCK), has always had the misfortune of living in the shadow of its larger neighbor to the east—the Missouri Kansas City. This ca. 1950 view of KCK looks east to the Missouri River and Kansas City, Missouri, beyond.

10. Perl W. Morgan, ed. and comp., *History of Wyandotte County, Kansas and Its People*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1911); Joseph H. McDowell, *Building a City: A Detailed History of Kansas City, Kansas* (Kansas City: Kansas City Kansan, 1969); Marilyn Dell Brady, *Doing Local History in Kansas City, Kansas: Resources, Methods and Issues* (Kansas City: Wyandotte County Museum, 1985).

11. James R. Shortridge, *Kaw Valley Landscapes: A Traveler’s Guide to Northeastern Kansas*, rev. ed. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988).



Because Topeka has served as the only capital city for the state since 1861, it has received a number of historical treatments over the years. This ca. 1912 photograph is looking south toward the statehouse. The heart of Topeka's downtown is just visible at the far left.

city and county with its innovative unified government at the forefront of economic development in the state for the first time in more than a century.

Now holding its place as Kansas's largest city for almost as long as KCK's reign, Wichita surged into the forefront of urban Kansas during World War II and rightfully retains its title as the state's metropolis as we begin the twenty-first century. Fittingly, it has its premier historian as well. Craig Miner of Wichita State University has published a spate of books about Wichita over the past several decades. Of these, this reviewer's favorite is his selection of descriptive pieces about living in the Air Capital of the World—*The Wichita Reader*.¹²

Miner also has studied a most important topic related to the establishment of Wichita as the state's central metropolis—the development of its quite important western Kansas hinterland.

While *West of Wichita* does not center on the growth of towns and cities in that region, it clearly indicates the connections, usually by rail, between places like Pratt, Ashland, and Ulysses along with the better-known places such as Dodge City and Garden City. Another important study of the earlier history of Kansas cowtowns is Robert R. Dykstra's *The Cattle Towns*. Here the author illustrates the very important role played by early towns in the economic life of the state following the Civil War.¹³

Because Topeka has served as the only capital city for the state since 1861, and perhaps because it is home to the superb Kansas State Historical Society, it has received a number of historical treatments over the years. One of the earliest studies serves as a snapshot of the city's founding through the eyes of a pioneer. Frye W. Giles published his *Thirty Years in Topeka* in 1886, which means he was present at the founding of the free-state town that became the capital after proslavery Lecompton fell by the wayside. Twenty-five years later another effort at recount-

12. H. Craig Miner, *Wichita: The Early Years, 1865–1880* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982); Miner, *Wichita, the Magic City* (Wichita, Kans.: Wichita-Sedgwick County Museum Assoc., 1988); Miner, ed., *The Wichita Reader: A Collection of Writing about a Prairie City* (Wichita, Kans.: Wichita Eagle and Beacon, 1992).

13. Craig Miner, *West of Wichita: Settling the High Plains of Kansas, 1865–1890* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986); Robert R. Dykstra, *The Cattle Towns: A Social History of the Kansas Cattle Trading Centers Abilene, Ellsworth, Wichita, Dodge City and Caldwell, 1867 to 1885* (New York: Knopf, 1968).

ing the rise of the capital city resulted in a little self-published volume, *Topeka, Kansas: A Capitol City*, by A. Owen Jennings.¹⁴

Subsequent studies have tended toward the celebratory including Roy Bird's *Topeka: An Illustrated History of the Kansas Capital*. Much of the analysis is useful in Robert Richmond's history of the capitol itself, which was printed in 1972 in the *Kansas Historical Quarterly*.¹⁵ What is still needed is a thorough study that places Kansas's governmental city in its proper context of affecting, and sometimes directing, the physical growth of the state. Although always overshadowed by its larger neighbors to the east, the two Kansas Cities, Topeka has more than held its own in the affections of most Sunflower State residents. This latter statement holds true even though a sizeable segment of western Kansas has long held that Topeka is entirely too far east to serve them effectively.

The designation of "suburban" Kansas seems even more improbable to many than "urban" Kansas. However, the U.S. Census Bureau listed almost as many suburban Kansans in 2005 as it did urban Kansans. The urban centers of metropolitan areas include Wichita, Overland Park, Kansas City, Topeka, and Lawrence. Those places include the following counties in their areas: Sedgwick, Butler, Harvey, Johnson, Miami, Linn, Franklin, Wyandotte, Leavenworth, Atchison, Shawnee, and Douglas. Subtracting the urban center populations from these county totals, the central locations total 842,705 residents while the surrounding suburban county areas include 729,463.

Although few studies of suburban Kansas have appeared, one that does provide significant attention to the development of several northeast Johnson County suburbs is my *J. C. Nichols and the Shaping of Kansas City*. Even though Nichols did much of his suburban development in and near Kansas City, Missouri, he created the modern Johnson County image by developing first Mission Hills, followed by Fairway and Prairie Village as important suburbs that catered to upper and middle income residents drawn to the Kansas side of the state line. As an Olathe product, Nichols came to be considered as one of the more important Kansans of the twentieth century.¹⁶

Of that group of "central places" among the metropolitan regions, Overland Park stands out as a city in transition. Until 2000 the Census Bureau considered it to be a suburb. Because in that census it actually surpassed the city to which it supposedly was a satellite—Kansas City, Kansas—to become the second largest city in Kansas, it is now considered a central place in addition to KCK and the bigger neighbor to the east, Kansas City, Missouri.

Bibliographically, Overland Park is so new (incorporated in the 1960s) that hardly any literature has sprung up to cover its rapid rise to population centrality. Historically, Kansas maps have noted an Overland Park since before 1910. It began as a promotional creation of the Missouri and Kansas Street Railroad, bet-

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14. Frye W. Giles, *Thirty Years in Topeka: An Historical Sketch* (Topeka: G. W. Crane and Co., 1886); A. Owen Jennings, *Topeka, Kansas: A Capitol City* (Springfield, Mo.: A. O. Jennings, 1911).

15. Roy Bird, *Topeka: An Illustrated History of the Kansas Capital* (Topeka: Baranski Publishing Co., 1985); Robert W. Richmond, "Kansas Builds a Capitol," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 38 (Autumn 1972): 249.

16. William S. Worley, *J. C. Nichols and the Shaping of Kansas City: Innovation in Planned Residential Communities* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990).



Lawrence would not be what it is without the university, which was established there in 1864. This very early view depicts the university's first buildings standing atop Mount Oread.

ter known as the Strang Line. Centered at what is today Eightieth and Santa Fe Trail in Johnson County, Overland Park began to expand its residential neighborhoods in the 1920s. In the 1950s when adjacent communities such as Prairie Village, Mission, and Leawood established themselves as independent cities, Overland Park continued as a legal nonentity organized only as Mission Urban Township until its incorporation.

In 1974 an initial effort at a city history came from the Comprehensive Planning Division of the relatively new city government. This slim volume, *History of Overland Park*, goes a

bit beyond mere celebration to document some important components of the city's expansion in its first decade. Quite recently the Overland Park Historical Society has issued a larger, more celebratory volume as an illustrated history with useful text and captions. The 1974 work actually placed Overland Park in its regional context while the more recent volume generally looks at the community in isolation from its county antecedents as well as from the larger impacts of the two Kansas Cities.¹⁷ Both books are important, but neither adequately places the history of the development of the city in the full context of the growth of the county and the region as a whole. An additional nonbook resource on the topic of suburbanization in general and particularly in Johnson County is at the Johnson County Museum in Shawnee. The permanent exhibit entitled *Seeking the Good Life* presents a well-structured overview of the process and results in this Kansas suburban county.

Lawrence has evolved into Kansas's premier educational city as well as becoming a small high-tech center and residential bedroom for both Topeka and Johnson County. Its amenities of the state's largest university, fine schools, and favorable location for commuters have combined to make it an even more important component of the state's urban network.

As is befitting for a college town with many resident curmudgeons, Lawrence has attracted several urban biographers over the years. Warranting special mention is David Dary, a former University of Kansas faculty member. More recently, Dennis Domer and Barbara Watkins, currently at the University of Kansas, edited a broad collection of descriptive and analytical articles about the city's history and

17. Community Development Department, *History of Overland Park* (Overland Park, Kans.: City of Overland Park, 1974); Overland Park Historical Society, Historic Sites Committee, *Overland Park: An Illustrated History* (San Antonio, Tex.: Historical Publishing Network, 2004).

current paths written by an array of present and former faculty and students of the university.¹⁸ This volume goes further toward supplying a contextual approach to the development of this important city than most works studying other major Kansas metropolises.

Of course Lawrence would not be what it is without the university. The best history of the University of Kansas and its host city is that of Clifford Griffin, a grand historian of the old school. Briefer studies of the impact of Haskell Indian Nations University are included as chapters in the Domer and Watkins compendium.¹⁹

The medium-sized, nonmetropolitan cities of Kansas are at least as interesting in their own right as are the larger centers. Outside the metropolitan sway, Salina and Manhattan have proven to be both resilient and vibrant although for rather different reasons.

Salina serves as the regional center for north-central and even northwest Kansas. It assumed this role in its early days as a rail and grain storage and processing center. The establishment of what evolved into Schilling Air Force Base during World War II boomed its population even further. A recent publication documents some of the essential aspects of Salina and Saline County history in a journalistic format. The definitive history of the Salina region in north-central Kansas remains to be written, although Shortridge provides some essential starting information toward such a study.²⁰

In fact, Shortridge adapted a useful set of categories for analyzing all Kansas cities and towns—employment specialization. In the case of Manhattan, he began to identify it as an “education town” as early as 1890. According to his data, Manhattan has remained in that classification ever since although its proximity to Fort Riley certainly causes fluctuations in city population as the fort’s population rises and falls in troop strength.²¹

The education factor for Manhattan was originally known as Kansas State Agricultural College and now functions as Kansas State University. Founded in 1863 in what may have been the first state compliance with the conditions of the Land-Grant College Act passed by Congress in 1862, Kansas State has evolved into a major research university while retaining strong programs in agriculture and engineering. By 2005 its enrollment exceeded twenty-two thousand. The city claimed 44,831 residents in the 2000 census. This total made it the ninth largest city in Kansas that year but the second largest (behind Salina) not part of a metropolitan area.

Historical treatments of the development of Manhattan range from Carolyn Jones’s unpaginated and strictly celebratory souvenir program written for the

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18. David A. Dary, *Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas: An Informal History*, (Lawrence, Kans.: Allen Books, 1982); Dennis Domer and Barbara Watkins, eds., *Embattled Lawrence: Conflict and Community* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Continuing Education, 2001).

19. Clifford S. Griffin, *The University of Kansas: A History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1974); Keith A. Sculle, “The New Carlisle of the West’: Haskell Institute and Big-time Sports, 1920–1932,” in *Embattled Lawrence*, ed. Domer and Watkins; Daniel Wildcat, “Haskell Indian Nations University: The Story of a Contested Terrain,” in *ibid*.

20. *Pictorial History of Saline County* (Marceline, Mo.: D-Books Publications, 2004); Shortridge, *Cities on the Plains*, 255–57, 325–26. The 2000 census put Salina’s population at 45,679.

21. Shortridge, *Cities on the Plains*, 216, 287.

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city's centennial in 1955 and retired radio personality Lowell Jack's 2003 brief *History of Manhattan, Kansas* to full volume treatments of the history of Kansas State.²² Of these, James C. Carey's *Kansas State University: The Quest for Identity* is the most complete and best documented although its 1977 publication omits the significant growth years for both the university and the city.

With the reassignment of the U.S. Army's First Division from Germany to adjacent Fort Riley, Manhattan will share the population expansion with neighboring Junction City. This factor, combined with continued expansion of KSU enrollment may well push this most representative college town over the fifty thousand minimum population needed to classify it as a metropolitan center by 2010. If that happens, it will join sister college town Lawrence, state capital Topeka, state metropolis Wichita and the Kansas City–Overland Park complex in that elite status.

In contrast to Manhattan, which has experienced mostly steady growth since World War II, Hutchinson is a medium-sized Kansas city that has clung to that status tenaciously while experiencing only modest growth since the war. With just over thirty thousand residents in 1940 and just over forty thousand residents in 2000, Hutchinson continues its important role as a regional center for west-central Kansas in spite of the almost overwhelming expansion of Wichita that at times threatens to transform the smaller city into a suburb some sixty miles away.

Still, Hutchinson retains its own unique history that is greatly punctuated by its origins as a railroad town and its role in salt mining and grain storage. It is currently putting the finishing touches on the Kansas Underground Salt Museum commemorating the city's colorful connection with the commercial names of Carey and Morton, among others. Its proximity to the central Kansas oil fields, extensive wheat farming, and important location along U.S. 50 bring a stability and prominence to this non-interstate highway community.²³

Historic treatments of Hutchinson have concentrated on its salt heritage, but at least two larger volumes document the city's wider importance. Hutchinson led the early junior college movement in Kansas and presently hosts one of the larger community colleges in the state. This fact, along with the relation of the city to the significant surrounding Mennonite culture, also deserves further study as does the impact of the presence of Dillon's stores (now a division of Kroger, Inc.) headquarters.²⁴

The meatpacking triangle of southwest Kansas that includes Dodge City, Garden City, and Liberal is deserving of special attention. Until the 1950s Kansas City and Wichita served as the meatpacking centers for Kansas, but in 2005 the plants located near the three western Kansas communities have transformed life and direction in all of them.

22. Carolyn Jones, *The First One Hundred Years: A History of the City of Manhattan, Kansas, 1855–1955* (Manhattan, Kans.: Manhattan Centennial, 1955); Lowell Jack, *A History of Manhattan, Kansas* (Manhattan, Kans.: 2003); J. Willard, *History of the Kansas State College of Agriculture and Applied Science* (Manhattan: Kansas State College Press, 1940); James C. Carey, *Kansas State University: The Quest for Identity* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1977).

23. Arman J. Habegger, "Out of the Mud: The Good Roads Movement in Kansas, 1900–1917" (master's thesis, University of Kansas, 1971); Beach Advertising Company, comp., *Hutchinson, Kansas* (Hutchinson, Kans.: Hutchinson Chamber of Commerce, 1951); Willard Welsh, *Hutchinson: A Prairie City* (Wichita, Kans.: McCormick–Armstrong Co., 1946).

24. *Hutchinson, the Salt City in the Heart of the Great Kansas Wheat Belt* (Hutchinson, Kans.: New Co., 1908); Welsh, *Hutchinson: A Prairie City in Kansas*; Pat Mitchell, *The Fair City: Hutchinson, Kansas* (Topeka: Josten's, 1982).

Dodge City, of course, has something of a livestock heritage dating from its heyday in the 1870s–1880s as the northern trailhead for the Texas cattle industry. The unique characteristics of Dodge City's early days are explored in C. Robert Haywood's *Victorian West*. Haywood's examination of the life and customs in Dodge City and other Kansas cowtowns updates without superseding Robert Dykstra's previously mentioned work.²⁵

Garden City and Liberal grew more with agricultural pursuits and oil and gas during the first half of the twentieth century. With decentralization in meatpacking resulting in the location of new plants closer to the cow–calf operations that produce most of the cattle for the trade, various packers both large and small established plants near these towns. The plants employ significant numbers of Hispanic, Asian, and African American newcomers to the community, creating social milieus, especially in Garden City, that have attracted a number of sociological studies. Indeed, *Urban Anthropology* devoted almost an entire 1990 issue to an analysis of the social changes in that city.²⁶

The impact of cattle feeding and livestock slaughter in the region has been effectively studied in a 1995 volume that looks at both the economic impact and the social change wrought by this surge in industrial activity in the southwest corner of the state.²⁷ Of course, there is more to these three towns than their ethnic and economic change with the rise of meatpacking. Each also has its more traditional and celebratory works to offer.²⁸

Emporia is a very different city than those in the southwest meatpacking district, yet it has at least one aspect in common—a very large meatpacking facility of its own. Now under the ownership of the huge Tyson Company, it began as a very large Iowa Beef pack-

Dodge City Enjoying New Cattle Boom

2 Big Packing Plants Being Built to Service Old West Cow Capital

DODGE CITY, Kan. (AP)—The dusty cattle drives and rowdy cowboys of a century ago are gone. But the plains of southwest Kansas still are cow country, and there's a boom under way that includes construction of the world's largest packing plant.

This table-flat country where fields of wheat and grazing land stretch to the horizon, produces about 6% of the 40 million head of cattle slaughtered annually nationwide. Cattlemen in this region, where there are more cows than people, control some of the largest herds in the country.

land, ranging from Iowa to Texas and Oklahoma to Colorado. Southwestern Kansas, lying just above the panhandles of Oklahoma and Texas, is one of the last areas without packing plants to process locally raised beef.

The world's largest beef packing plant is rising from pastureland near Garden City. Iowa Beef processors Inc., the nation's No. 1 beef producer, broke ground this autumn for a \$60 million plant that will cover an area larger than three football fields.

By 1984, 2,000 people will be on the payroll there and 4,000 head of cattle will be slaughtered daily.

At Dodge City, MBPXL Corp., the country's No. 2 beef packer, has a \$29 million plant almost completed. By February, 500 workers will be slaughtering 3,600 head a day there. And the company says it may expand.

The two plants will spend nearly \$6 million a day on cattle, buying most of it from ranches and feedlots in the area. Ample stocks also are handy in nearby Colorado, Oklahoma and Texas.

Packers like to build their plants as close to the cattle supply as possible. By locating in southwest Kansas, Iowa Beef and MBPXL figure they'll save 50 cents in transportation costs

Making up a third of the meatpacking triangle of southwest Kansas, Dodge City has a livestock heritage dating to its cattle-driving heyday of the 1870s–1880s. Its "modern" role in the cattle industry, which has been ongoing for the past two decades, is the focus of this newspaper article from the November 26, 1979, Los Angeles Times.

25. C. Robert Haywood, *Victorian West: Class and Culture in Kansas Cowtowns* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991); Dykstra, *The Cattle Towns*.

26. Michael J. Broadway, "The Origins and Determinants of Indochinese Secondary In-Migration to S. W. Kansas," *Heritage of the Great Plains* 20 (Spring 1987): 19–29; Broadway, "Meatpacking and Its Social and Economic Consequences for Garden City, Kansas, in the 1980s," *Urban Anthropology* 19 (1990): 321–44; Broadway, "Beef Stew: Cattle, Immigrants, and Established Residents in a Kansas Beef-packing Town," in *Newcomers in the Workplace: New Immigrants and the Restructuring of the U. S. Economy*, ed. Louise Lamphere, Guillermo Grenier, and Alex Stepick (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994): 25–43. See also Arthur L. Campa, "Immigrant Latinos and Resident Mexican Americans in Garden City, Kansas: Ethnicity and Ethnic Relations," *Urban Anthropology* 19 (1990): 345–60; Mark A. Grey, "Immigrant Students in the Heartland: Ethnic Relations in Garden City, Kansas High School," *Urban Anthropology* 19 (1990): 409–32.

27. The most accessible summary of all this work is Donald M. Stull, Michael J. Broadway, and David Griffith, eds., *Any Way You Cut It: Meat Processing and Small-Town America*. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995); Stull, "When the Packers Came to Town: Changing Ethnic Relations in Garden City, Kansas," *Urban Anthropology* 19 (1990): 303–27.

28. For Dodge City, see Odie B. Faulk, *Dodge City: The Most Western Town of All* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); for Garden City, see Holly Hope, *Garden City: Dreams in a Kansas Town* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988); for Liberal, the least studied of the triangle cities, see *Kansas Centennial Futurama Edition* (Liberal, Kans.: Southwest Daily Times, March 15, 1961).

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ing plant in the 1960s. In 2002 the plant employed 2,590 persons with the largest number of Hispanic descent. Indeed, the small college town of Emporia has a distinctly Latin flavor to its stores and restaurants.²⁹

The city's location on a rail mainline and at the intersection of two interstate highways (I-35 from Kansas City and Wichita and I-335 from Topeka) has made it a central metropolis for south-central Kansas between the two larger metro regions of Wichita and Topeka. However, its most distinguishing characteristic has always been its colleges and newspaper. Although the College of Emporia is only a memory along with the influence brought to the town by editor William Allen White, Emporia State University and the *Emporia Gazette* remain institutions to be reckoned with in the twenty-first century. Emporia State dates to its origins as the Kansas State Normal School in the immediate post-Civil War era of legislative placement of institutions across the state to spread the patronage.

For all its importance historically and currently as well as the presence of a long-standing institution of higher education, the community has been the subject of surprisingly few analytical works. One of the best recent studies incorporates Emporia and William Allen White as metaphors for middle-class America. Edward Agran studied the social life and customs of the long-time settled community while also taking new residents somewhat into account. His use of White as a symbolic figure is especially striking. White comes in for a more admiring treatment that concentrates on his journalistic influence in Sally Griffith's *Home Town News*. Both these books offer new approaches to urban history in Kansas. Agran does so through his subject matter, and Griffith provides a unique window into the history of Emporia through the life of its most illustrious citizen.³⁰

Hays and Pittsburg are at one level similar towns to Emporia although very different in location and their history. Each of these small cities house one of the former state teachers' colleges. Initially, both the predecessors of Fort Hays State University and Pittsburg State University began as branches of the Kansas State Normal School in Emporia. However, beyond the teaching connection, Fort Hays State has also maintained an affiliation to agriculture and Kansas State University in Manhattan. Pittsburg, on the other hand, developed, and still features, extensive vocational and industrial education programs along with its more comprehensive offerings.

As a city of the High Plains, Hays also forms the cultural center of the portion of the state settled by the Volga German Catholics who immigrated from Russia in the 1870s and 1880s. Pittsburg has its own ethnically diverse history because of the intense coal and zinc mining in the region that first gave it prominence along with the Kansas City, Pittsburg and Gulf Railroad (now Kansas City Southern) constructed through the city in the late 1890s. Eastern European settlers and mining families immigrated to Crawford and nearby Cherokee Counties during the height of the mining era from the 1880s to World War II. Their descendants still provide a unique component of Pittsburg culture and history.

29. Shortridge, *Cities on the Plains*, 335.

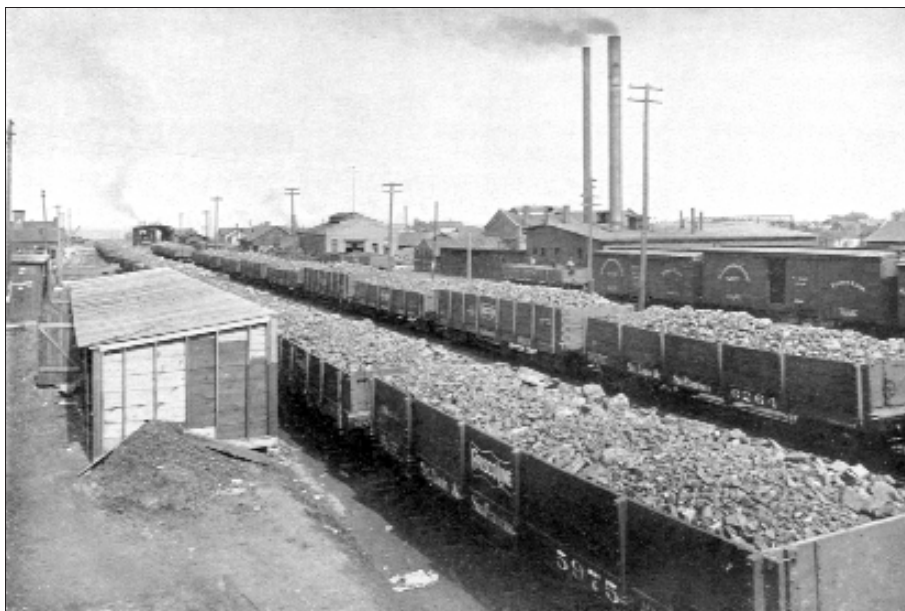
30. Edward Gale Agran, *Too Good a Town: William Allen White, Community and the Emerging Rhetoric of Middle America* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1998); Sally Foreman Griffith, *Home Town News: William Allen White and the Emporia Gazette* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

Historical treatments of Hays include Leo Oliva's brief specialized account of the activity at the old fort itself (decommissioned in 1889). Lyman Wooster wrote a comprehensive study of the early years of Fort Hays State University in 1961, and Maureen Winter authored a newspaper-style summary of city and county history in 1967. As with most other small to medium-sized cities in Kansas, the definitive work that analyzes the social development and role of the city in the region has yet to be written.³¹

Junction City is one of those Kansas towns that saw itself destined for great things because of its geographic location. Founders staked their claims at the point where the Smoky Hill and Republican Rivers joined to form what is known as the Kansas River from that spot to its mouth at the Missouri River. In the 1850s river junctions seemed momentous spots so the founders named the town accordingly—Junction City.

As it turned out, the already established army camp that evolved into Fort Riley nearby has proven to be much more important to the life and sustainability of Junction City than the rivers' juncture for which it is named. The early history of that relationship between fort and town is explored in a recent study by William Dobak, *Fort Riley and Its Neighbors*. The topic also receives comparative coverage in an anthology covering various primarily military towns and cities across America, *The Martial Metropolis*. Finally, the town itself has garnered some special attention because of a remarkable set of photographs taken in the community during a thirty-year period around the turn of the twentieth century. It is possible that J. J. Pennell's photographs of Junction City do more to document the town than almost any other similarly sized community in America at that time.³²

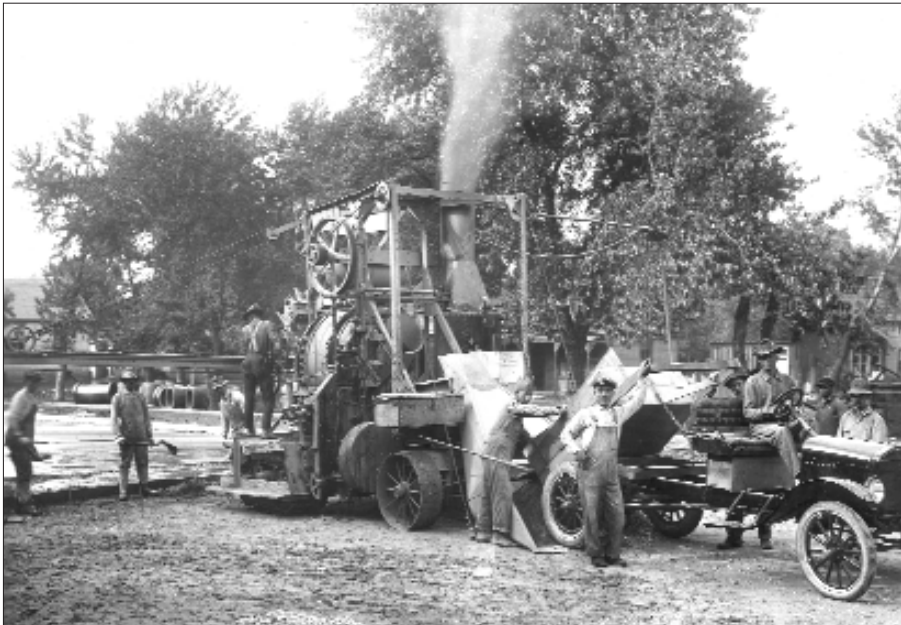
Newton may be Kansas's quintessential railroad town. Although it never grew to the size many envisioned because of its location at the junction of two



Like Emporia and Hays, Pittsburg is home to one of the former state teachers' colleges. Pittsburg, however, has its own diverse history largely due to the intense coal and zinc mining in the region, which attracted eastern European immigrants. Depicted here in 1902 are carloads of coal at Pittsburg's St. Louis and San Francisco Railway yards.

31. Leo Oliva, *Fort Hays: Keeping Peace on the Plains* (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1996), first published in 1980 and revised as part of a series of studies of eight frontier forts across Kansas; Lyman D. Wooster, *Fort Hays Kansas State College: An Historical Story* (Hays, Kans.: Fort Hays Kansas State College, 1961); Maureen Winter, ed., *From Indians to Industry: A History of Hays and Ellis County* (Ellis, Kans.: Ellis County Star, 1967).

32. William A. Dobak, *Fort Riley and Its Neighbors: Military Money and Economic Growth, 1853–1895* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998); Gregory Frontenot, "Junction City–Fort Riley: A Case of Symbiosis," in *The Martial Metropolis: U. S. Cities at War and Peace*, ed. Roger W. Lotchin (New York: Praeger, 1984), 35–60; James R. Shortridge, *Our Town on the Plains: J. J. Pennell's Photographs of Junction City, Kansas, 1893–1922* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000).



The history of Junction City has been well documented through the photographs of J. J. Pennell, who recorded in images the town during a thirty-year period around the turn of the twentieth century. In this photo Pennell has captured workers paving a Junction City street in 1919.

main lines for the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad (now Burlington, Northern and Santa Fe), it continues as a division point and hosts a town full of rail enthusiasts. But today it no longer even qualifies as a city where the railroad is the major employer. Home to Bethel College and at the intersection of U.S. 50 and I-135, Newton serves as a more diversified center than during its railroad concentration era.

Books such as L. M. Hurley's *Newton, Kansas: #1 Santa Fe Rail Hub, 1871–1971* are definitely efforts to relive the town's glory years. Also to the point is a master's thesis that concentrates on the development of the community in its earliest days when railroad and cattle trail intersected here to briefly make Newton a cattle railhead. The small city is also fortunate to have Rachel Waltner's more complete, if somewhat celebratory, work entitled *Brick and Mortar: A History of Newton, Kansas*.³³

The last of Kansas's small cities included in this foray is Great Bend. An oil and agricultural community, Great Bend has struggled to maintain its secondary position to Hutchinson and Hays as one of west-central Kansas's commercial centers. It has diversified into other industry, but its location on neither a rail main line nor an interstate highway definitely has kept this ambitious community somewhat in check. Its local community college helps provide employment and educational opportunities for the surrounding region. Indeed, almost all of the smaller cities featured in this essay have some form of educational institution to


33. I. M. Hurley, *Newton, Kansas: #1 Santa Fe Hub, 1871–1971* (Topeka: Josten's, 1985); John D. Waltner, "The Process of Civilization on the Kansas Frontier: Newton, Kansas, 1871–73" (master's thesis, University of Kansas, 1871); Rachel Waltner, *Brick and Mortar: A History of Newton, Kansas* (North Newton, Kans.: Mennonite Library and Archives, 1984). See also James R. Shortridge, "The Missing Railroad Cities Along the Union Pacific and Santa Fe Lines in Kansas," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 26 (Autumn 2003): 186.

bolster the local economy. Only Junction City, adjacent to Manhattan and Kansas State University, does not have a community college, private college, or state institution within its boundaries.

In terms of written history, Great Bend has a centennial book like many other communities and articles about its role in the oil business and the location of a Fuller Brush factory within its boundaries. Once again, sadly, it has no study to shed light on what life is really like for the diverse population who make up this important small Kansas city.³⁴

A great need remains for a comparative analysis of the suburban development of Johnson County in the context of its relation to Kansas City, Missouri; Kansas City, Kansas; and, most recently, the Lawrence metropolitan area as well. Johnson County is now the largest population county in the state and yet it is little understood and even more frequently dismissed as a bedroom of people who only land in Kansas for a few years before moving up elsewhere in their corporation's ladder.

Yet Johnson County may be the most suburban of any county in America. It contains a wide variety of residents from the very wealthy of Mission Hills to the working class in Olathe. It includes the vast majority of the Jewish population of metropolitan Kansas City within its boundaries. It is home to Fortune 500 company headquarters such as Sprint Nextel and Yellow Roadway. Such a variety of residents, businesses, and economic potential well deserves an in-depth treatment from a senior historian conducting careful research and employing the best in analytic techniques.

Elsewhere in the state, current and historical social analyses of Wichita, Kansas City, Overland Park, and such smaller places as Pittsburg and Hays certainly are in order. Kansas is becoming much more diverse. New arrivals deserve to be included in the state's wonderful history just as Asians, Hispanics, and African Americans are beginning to receive their just attention in communities like Garden City. Until now the businesses and employment figures have dominated the more analytic efforts at understanding urban Kansas. In the future we need to know more about the people of urban Kansas—individually and collectively. This knowledge will transform our understanding of Kansas cities from mere economic entities to the living, breathing, and vibrant places they have been and are becoming. 

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34. *Great Bend, Kansas: A Historical Portrait of the City* (Great Bend, Kans.: Centennial Book Committee, 1972); "Oil Industry Making Great Bend a Boom Town," *Kansas Business Magazine* 22 (October 1954): 48; Margaret Shauers, "Fuller Brush: Largest Employer in Great Bend," *Kansas Business News* 8 (August 1987): 17–18.